

This Week in Congress

June 19, 2006

Dear Friend,

Welcome to "This Week in Congress." I hope you find this newsletter useful.

Wheat Harvest Underway in Kansas - Visiting Southwest Kansas Farm

This weekend, I visited the farm of Russell and Mark Fischer in Ford County to get a firsthand look at the condition of the Kansas wheat crop. Kansas is expected to yield a harvest that is the worst in a decade and about 75 percent of normal. The conditions in Ford County were every bit as bad, if not worse. My observations at the Fischer farm have further strengthened my resolve to fight for disaster assistance for Kansas farmers who continue to experience losses from drought conditions.

Though some disaster assistance was provided in the passage of the Emergency Supplemental this week, it is targeted only to producers in hurricane-devastated areas. I spoke to the House of Representatives about the effects of the multiple-year drought on farmers in the Midwest and advocated that Congress pass disaster assistance this year for areas of the country suffering from drought and other natural disasters.

It is one thing to deny farmers across the country assistance, but to pick and choose which farmers receive assistance is unacceptable. An act of God is an act of God. The inadequate moisture in the Midwest accounts for no less damage than that experienced by farmers in Louisiana, Mississippi and Alabama.

I have sponsored the Natural Disaster Relief Act to provide assistance to agricultural producers for crop and livestock losses resulting from recent, catastrophic natural disasters. Similar legislation has passed Congress twice since I arrived in Washington, D.C. It has allowed some farmers who might be unable to continue farming to remain in business another year.

The visit to the Fischer farm helps me paint the picture when I return to Washington, D.C., about what is going on in Kansas agriculture and the circumstances farmers and ranchers are facing that are beyond their control.

For full text of the speech I delivered to the House of Representatives, visit: http://www.house.gov/list/speech/ks01_moran/sp061206KSFarmersNeedRelief.html

Emergency Grazing Approved for 31 Counties

Kansas livestock producers received good news this week when the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) announced its approval of a Kansas Farm Service Agency (FSA) request for early emergency grazing of Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) acres in 31 Kansas counties. I appreciate USDA's early decision as the release of these CRP acres is a positive step that will help alleviate some of the problems our farmers and ranchers are facing.

The 31 counties approved for emergency grazing of CRP acreage are Cheyenne, Clark, Comanche, Decatur, Edwards, Ellis, Ellsworth, Finney, Gove, Graham, Grant, Gray, Greeley, Hamilton, Haskell, Kearny, Lane, Lincoln, Logan, Meade, Morton, Ness, Osborne, Rawlins, Rush, Russell, Seward, Stanton, Stevens, Thomas and Trego. The Kansas FSA office originally requested emergency grazing for 45 counties. The other counties were not accepted because they did not meet the requirement of 40 percent moisture loss. According to the Kansas FSA office, extraordinary conditions, like spotty rainfall, can be described to waive this requirement and these counties may be reconsidered when additional documentation is submitted.

House Debates Iraq, War on Terrorism

The House set aside Thursday and part of Friday to engage in a formal debate about U.S. policy in Iraq and the War on Terrorism. It is important for Congress to regularly evaluate the future of our military commitments around the globe. The discussion concluded with the House approving a resolution that honors the sacrifices of our armed forces and declares the commitment of the U.S. to prevail against terrorism. I also attended a briefing this week by Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld on the status of efforts to create a free and secure Iraq. The briefing also included John Negroponte, National Intelligence Director, and General Peter Pace, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

Houses Passes Amendment to Increase Agricultural Trade with Cuba

The House of Representatives this week approved an amendment I offered that seeks to increase the ability of U.S. agriculture producers to market their products to Cuba. The amendment, supported by numerous organizations within the agriculture community, was for the Transportation, Treasury, and Housing and Urban Development Appropriations bill.

In 2000, I successfully opened the door to trade with Cuba through legislation that allowed for the export of agriculture products for the first time in 38 years. However, last year, against the will of Congress, the Department of Treasury changed its interpretation of the cash payment in advance rule as it relates to agriculture exports to Cuba. The change caused payments to be

made before the ships leave the ports rather than making payment upon delivery. Agriculture exports to Cuba were on the rise from 2001 to 2005, but the change resulted in decreases in agricultural trade between the two countries. My amendment prohibits Department of Treasury funds from being used to administer, implement or enforce its change of the payment of cash in advance rule.

There is no reason for our own government to make these sales more difficult. Cuba must be able to count on the consistency of U.S. trading rules and, if the rule persists, will get its goods elsewhere. Unilateral sanctions by the United States are only harmful to our agriculture industry and our farmers.

Recognizing President Eisenhower & the 50th Anniversary of the Interstate System

This week, I spoke in favor of a resolution recognizing the 50th Anniversary of the Interstate Highway System. President Dwight D. Eisenhower signed the Federal-Aid Highway Act on June 29, 1956. This law established a 41,000 mile national system of interstate and defense highways, known as the Interstate Highway System. The resolution, which later that day passed unanimously in the House, recognizes the powerful impact that the Interstate Highway System has had on our nation's operations.

Kansas ranks fourth in the nation in terms of public roads. The First District alone has more road miles than 29 states. I applaud the vision of President Eisenhower who, growing up in Abilene, saw firsthand the need for a system of highways, roads, and bridges to link Kansas producers and travelers to the rest of our great nation.

For full text of my speech, visit: http://www.house.gov/list/speech/ks01_moran/06130650thAnnInterstateSystem.html

Reviewing Efforts to Eliminate Waste, Fraud and Abuse in the Crop Insurance Program

The House conducted a spring cleaning this week in an effort to curb wasteful spending. In support of this effort, my Subcommittee on General Farm Commodities and Risk Management exercised its oversight authority in a hearing to determine if sufficient prevention and detection efforts are in place in the administration of the crop insurance program.

Crop insurance is a vital component of many farm operations throughout Kansas and the nation and my Subcommittee is charged with ensuring that the program is not only meeting the needs of our producers, but that money is being used properly. In 2005, the program provided producers with over \$44 billion in liability protection through about 1.2 million policies. USDA's

Risk Management Agency (RMA) estimates less than one half of one percent of the agency's spending in 2005 was a result of waste, fraud and abuse.

It is a priority of mine to assure that government programs run efficiently so that taxpayer money isn't wasted. We will continue to closely monitor the crop insurance program as well as other programs under its jurisdiction. Witnesses included the U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO), RMA Administrator Eldon Gould, Robert Parkerson of Overland Park who serves as President of National Crop Insurance Services, and other industry representatives.

Visiting Local Businesses and Community Members in Abilene

On Monday, I spent time in Abilene stopping at local businesses and visiting with community members. I stopped at Bankes Health Mart, Abilene Animal Hospital, West Stop Convenience Store, the Reflector-Chronicle newspaper office, KABI radio station, City Hall and the Chamber of Commerce.

In the Office

In the office this week were American College of Surgeons representatives Dr. Tyler Hughes of McPherson, Dr. Dale Denning of Lawrence, Dr. Elizabeth Paulsen of Olathe, Dr. Michael Davoren of Overland Park and Chip Wheelen of Topeka to discuss the need for medical liability reform and the importance of reforming the Medicare physician payment system. In from Hutchinson was Jeff Ollenburger, President of the Kansas Cosmosphere and Space Center, to give me an update on activity at the Cosmosphere. Joining him were his wife, Kerrie, and daughter, Katie.

George Bronson and Phillip Jarvis of Winfield were in the office to talk about issues important to the City of Winfield Gas Utility, such as the need for better market transparency and access to offshore natural gas reserves. In representing the University of Kansas was Rick Ginsberg of Lawrence to highlight the School of Education's successes and their plans to expand into other areas of the state.

Pat McNerney of Wichita was in representing Pizza Hut Franchisees to discuss illegal immigration and his opposition to the death tax. Tammy Davis of Lawrence and Philip Bradley of Topeka were in representing the Kansas Licensed Beverage Association to share their thoughts on small business health plans, immigration reform, and their opposition to the death tax. They also highlighted some of their industries' efforts to prevent drunk driving and underage drinking.

Feras Adb Elkader visited my office as part of his participation in the Close Up program, which educates students about the democratic process. Feras is a foreign exchange student from Israel living in Salina. Also in the office this week were FFA students from Atwood, Great Bend, Hays, Hill City, Holcomb, Jetmore, Stafford and Wellington. These young men and women were in Washington, D.C., for the National FFA Organization's Washington Leadership Conference.

Several people were in my office this week for tours of the United States Capitol. Among these were Aaron Westerman of Solomon, Laury Kuder of Salina, Kenton and Diane Ladenburger of Pratt, and Gary and Mary Ann Shoreman of Hays. Dr. Donald and Bernice Kenneweg of Virginia were in to bring by their grand-nephew, Aaron Kucharik, who was visiting from Scott City. Jon and Rebecca Heiman of Garden City also came by with their children, Jonathan, Sarah and Eric, as well as Tim and Debbie Peglow, formerly of Garden City.

Rex Kraus, Mayor of Eskridge, came by for a tour with several folks from Topeka, including Brian Thompson, Gerald Raab, Cathy Kinder, Lisa Cameron and Diane McDermid. Robert Thomas of Hutchinson came by with his son, Tyler, who represented the state of Kansas in forensics at National History Day in Washington, D.C., this year.

Very truly yours,

Jerry